

PART 1: FINANCIAL RESOURCES

Part 1 Chapter 17: Visit Mississippi Tourism Matching Grants Program

Rule 17.1 Purpose. The goal of the program is to generate increased travel into and/or within Mississippi, have broad appeal targeting markets beyond the local area and make an economic impact on the area through tourism promotion. Mississippi Tourism Rebate Program, administered by the Mississippi Development Authority.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended

Rule 17.2 Eligibility Requirements. Eligible applicants for funding are Mississippi Convention and Visitors Bureaus or Chambers of Commerce with designated Tourism Council or Commission or establish Tourism Councils with the primary objective of promoting tourism. In addition, an applicant organization that receives grant funding must be the responsible party for placement of advertising.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.3 Auditing. For auditing purposes, we must have an established tourism entity designated as a financial base for the payment of the grant monies.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.4 Items Eligible for Funding Consideration. Projects eligible for funding consideration include only those directly related to the promotional efforts targeted to markets outside your immediate area (over 100 mile radius or out of state). The following are the only projects eligible and applicable costs after submission and approval of the applicant's final report, which must be submitted to the Director of Visit Mississippi within 60 working days of the project's completion.

- A. Advertising through mass media, including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, billboards and internet advertising, including social media (eligible for up to 50% of the project cost. PLEASE NOTE THAT ADVERTISING IN THE MISSISSIPPI TOUR GUIDE IS INELIBLE FOR SUBMISSION.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.5 Process and Selection Criteria. The selection process will be carried out by a five-member committee made up of the president (or his designee) of the Mississippi Hotel & Lodging Association, the Mississippi Restaurant Association and the Mississippi Tourism Association, plus two additional members appointed by the Director of Visit Mississippi.

- A. The committee will meet in November 2014 to review projects. All projects for consideration must be submitted to Visit Mississippi by 5:00 pm October 28, 2014. All grant recipients must be notified in writing of the eligibility of their submitted project 40 working days after submission to Visit Mississippi. All projects must be completed within one year from the date of approval.

****NOTE: FUNDING WILL BE AVAILABLE ONLY AFTER PROJECT COMPLETION (Reimbursable Grant).**

- B. Each applicant will be judged objectively and solely on the merits of the project through the approved Performance Evaluation Expenditure Review (PEER) Rating System. The decisions rendered by the Grant Committee are final and are not appealable to the State Tourism Director

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §57-27-1, et seq (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.6 Checklist for Project Requirements. All projects receiving a grant must adhere to the following rules. If any of these rules are not followed, a project will be deemed ineligible for consideration, and the Director of Visit Mississippi will withhold monies to the project. The rules are:

- A. Display Mississippi's logo and grant phrase. All funded projects must display the Visit Mississippi logo. **All radio ads must use the grant phrase, "This project is partially funded by Visit Mississippi."** Projects will receive NO funding if the logo/grant phrase is not included on the project(s).
- B. Display organizations' contact information. All funded projects must list the contact information such as address, telephone number and/or website for general inquiries.
- C. Copy should generate interest in local tourism offerings (product). Ineligible material includes quality of life, industrial/retirement recruitment, and will not be funded. No photocopies or quick print materials are allowed.
- D. Grant monies cannot be used to match state-generated or appropriated funds.
- E. If organization receives state appropriated funds, then the organization is ineligible for match grant funds under this program.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §57-27-1, et seq (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.7 Attachments for Application. The following material must be attached/included with the application:

- A. Potential for economic return. Number II in the Matching Grant Application. All applications must identify target audiences and demonstrate potential for economic return. (****NOTE: IF THIS IS A REPEAT PROJECT, PLEASE REPORT RESULTS IN SECTION V OF THE TOURISM MATCHING GRANTS APPLICATION**)
- B. Project distribution/media plan/marketing plan. Number IV in the Matching Grants Application. All applications must identify means of distribution (how will your target audience receive your information). Utilizing paid media, you list the name of the publication, the size of the ad, dates ad will run and actual ad cost. This is necessary whether newspaper, radio, television, magazine, billboard or digital/online advertising (website banner ads, Facebook ads, Twitter ads, etc.) is whether used. Because the Visit Mississippi Tourism Matching Grants Program is designed to bring new visitors into an area, local advertising is ineligible. Your marketing plan must reflect the project's strength and appeal in bringing new visitors into your area. Include Advertising Placement Schedule.
- C. Project Research. Number V in the Matching Grants Application. All applicants must provide methods for research tracking measurement of each project's results.

Research results must be submitted to Visit Mississippi within one year of project completion. The procedure used to research the effectiveness of your advertising and promotional efforts must be included.

****Examples:**

*To use redeemable coupon in print and/or paid media, you would put a different tracking code on each of the coupons. When the coupon is redeemed, you could identify the medium that was used and determine which medium produced the best results.

*You can ask callers where they heard or saw your advertisement.

*You can conduct consumer intercept surveys on site.

*Specific landing page on your website to which you drive consumers.

- D. Verifiable research data. If funding permits, this program will be available next year. Please keep in mind that all repeat projects will require verifiable research data. Cost per inquiry may be considered a factor.
- E. Professional fees. Visit Mississippi will not be responsible for any professional fees incurred in this project. This includes production costs and commissions.
- F. Authorizing signatures. All submitted projects must bear the signature of the authorizing officer of the organization and/or the Chief Financial Officer.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §57-27-1, et seq (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.8 General Grant Fulfillment Information.

- A. Notification of the grant awards. All projects approved for funding must receive written confirmation from Visit Mississippi within 40 working days. (No oral approvals will be allowed).
- B. Modifications to grant projects. If a project changes during the development stages, then a letter is to be written to Visit Mississippi for approval before modification. The letter is to state what has been approved for funding, the requested change, the reasons for the change and any alterations in cost. Project changes must be submitted to Visit Mississippi for approval prior to modification. Any modification to a grant resulting in a cost increase up to 10 percent more than the original designated amount may be approved by the grant coordinator.
- C. Acceptance letter. The letter of acceptance must be returned to the Visit Mississippi within 15 working days after notification of grant approval.
- D. Final reports. Completed grant reports must be received by Visit Mississippi within one year of grant award date or the project may be rejected for funding.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §57-27-1, et seq (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.9 Final Report Checklist (Grant Applicant/Grant Coordinator).

- A. Is backup documentation arranged in same order as listed on original application?
- B. Is copy of vendor's invoice included? Eligible/applicable expenditures should be highlighted – sales tax not eligible.
- C. Is copy of the canceled checks (front and back) or Bank Statement providing proof of payment included and attached to invoices?

- D. Is one original advertisement/tear sheet, tape or brochure included? If a project is completed with ineligible material (quality of life, industrial/retirement recruitment) included, then it will NOT be funded.
- E. Is the Visit Mississippi logo/grant phrase included on the project? The Visit Mississippi Director will withhold funds if the logo is not included.
- F. Is the signature of the Director or Chief Financial Officer of the applicant, verifying the project has been completed, included?
- G. Is the sample invoice for receipt of payment complete and included?
- H. Is a written description of the event or project and the impact or contribution it had on tourism included? (Media, billboard advertisements include description, name or media, location and dates ads ran).
- I. The above items must be checked off and included in the final report submitted to Visit Mississippi in order for projects to be processed for final payment.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.10 Awarding of Funds. Approved projects will receive all of the funded amount (up to 50 percent of total eligible costs) after submission and approval of the applicant's final report, which must be submitted to the Visit Mississippi Director of Tourism within one year of the grant award date. All funds awarded must be matched on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the applicant. Matching contributions must be in hard cash, not in-kind contributions. The match must be budgeted and allocated funds earmarked to the proposal. Applying organizations will be accountable for all monies awarded and responsible for submission and tracking of all research and measurement of project results. The tourism organization receiving a grant from Visit Mississippi, as well as any organization participating in this grant, will be subject to audit by the State Auditor's Office. If the completed project cost is higher than the estimate, the organization will receive the amount originally approved when the awards were made on project proposals. If the total cost of the completed project is less than the provided estimate, the organization will be awarded the designated percentage of the lesser amount. (Example: if a project with a total estimated cost of \$4,000 received an award of 50 percent or \$2,000 and the actual cost was \$3,000, then the project would receive 50 percent of the final cost, or \$1,500.) The maximum of up to \$50,000 total grant monies is available per tourism entity/community for calendar year 2015. No amount of funding is guaranteed through this program. If funds exist following the grant allocation distribution, monies will be open to all applicants once the grant coordinator sets a second deadline.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended.

Rule 17. 11. Sample Invoice Information. The following information listed in quotations must be retyped on documents with your letterhead. Fill in the information for your project and include it in your final report. It must:

- A. Be titled "Invoice for Payment";
- B. Include "Contact Name";
- C. Include "Organization Name" (as listed on the tax ID form),
- D. Include "Mailing Address",

- E. Include “City, State, Zip”,
- F. Include “Project Title”,
- G. Include “Project Code”(This number is listed in the letter of confirmation from Visit Mississippi),
- H. Include “Estimated cost of project listed on the application”.
- I. Include “Actual Cost of the Project” (Only approved expenditures relating to grant project from original application), and
- J. Include “Match Grant Amount Due” (If project cost is less than estimate, you may receive only the designated percentage of the actual cost; if the project cost exceeds the estimate, you may receive only the original grant amount awarded).
- K. Contact Visit Mississippi Tourism Matching Grants Program for additional information.

Source: Miss. Code Ann. §57-27-1, et seq (1972), as amended.

Rule 17.12 Contact Information. For more information on the Visit Mississippi Tourism Matching Grants program, please contact:

Carla Moor at 601-359-3297 or by email at cmoor@mississippi.org

Miss. Code Ann. § 57-27-1 *et seq.* (1972), as amended.